

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/ PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Burrel Woodring, Chair

Dan Davis

Arden Fritz

Hal Henry

Lois Long

Jenny Overton

George Patrick

Bill Reid

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/ PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

The Economic Development/Public Services Committee's main responsibility was to review the functions of the following County departments.

- Agriculture, Weights & Measures
- Airports
- County Fire
- County Library
- County Museum
- Economic & Community Development
- Jobs & Employment Services
- Land Use Services
- Public Works (Flood Control/Transportation/Regional Parks/Waste Systems)
- Redevelopment Agency
- Registrar of Voters
- Special Districts

After careful review of prior Grand Jury reports, the following subcommittees were formed to conduct in-depth oversight evaluations of the departments listed below.

- Airports
- County Fire
- County Museum
- Economic & Community Development
- Land Use Services/Code Enforcement
- Registrar of Voters
- Special Districts

With the exception of Airports and Special Districts, findings from these investigations are detailed in this final report.

During the investigation of the Registrar of Voters, the committee observed and monitored two general and one special election using the new touch-screen Sequoia system. After the initial errors were corrected, the system functioned as designed.

This committee reviewed three citizen complaints received during the year. Two were acted upon.

A special Ad Hoc Committee on the fire disasters of 2003 was formed by this Grand Jury to look into County operations of the Grand Prix and Old Waterman fires. As part of the inquiry, the County Fire subcommittee participated in interviews with Fire and Communications personnel.

Due to Grand Jury budget constraints, the County Fire subcommittee was unable to properly investigate Board-governed Fire Protection Districts.

COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

BACKGROUND

The San Bernardino County Fire Department provides a full range of emergency, fire and administrative services for 32 separate County fire districts and several contract cities. These services include all phases of fire suppression, selected ambulance transport, paramedics, and large incident command and control.

Levels of service vary based on each community or fire district's revenue and level of risk. Staffing also varies from total paid-call to two or three regular firefighters on an engine. Emergency medical services range from minimally trained First Responders to Emergency Medical Technicians to Paramedics. The County Fire Department is the largest provider of pre-hospital care in the County and second largest ambulance transport provider.

FINDINGS

The Hazardous Materials Household Waste Division is located at San Bernardino International Airport. It is a multi-faceted operation providing regulatory oversight of the collection of business and household hazardous waste. It serves the unincorporated areas as well as all 24 cities and towns in the County. It accepts motor oil, oil filters, antifreeze, auto and household batteries, pesticides, fertilizers, chemical cleaners, hobby/pool supplies, and other designated hazardous waste. At the Recycling Center, recycled items such as paint are sorted, processed and made available, for free, for use in graffiti abatement. Non-restrictive household products are stored and shelved to be made available free to any county citizen.

The Communications Center at Rialto Airport is housed in a temporary building. It houses state-of-the-art technology that represents a substantial investment by the County. This is one of seven (7) fire dispatch centers serving 42 different fire agencies and districts in San Bernardino County. The Emergency/Disaster Center is located in another building on this site. The physical security for these facilities is good, but the buildings are inadequate and not fully earthquake proof.

The County is currently planning to consolidate all County Fire facilities at San Bernardino International Airport.

Cost recovery is a system whereby the County can recover money for services rendered by fire departments and paramedics where insurance or other funds are provided for such service. Cost recovery for County Fire declined when handled by another non-Fire County office. This function was recently returned to the department's Fiscal Services staff and they plan to aggressively pursue collections. There are provisions for cost recovery

contained in the County fee package which establishes the recoverable fees for County services. This area of potential income to the County has been allowed to deteriorate over the past few years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 04-09 DESIGN AND BUILD A LARGER PERMANENT COMMUNICATIONS AND EMERGENCY/DISASTER CENTER AT A LOCATION CLOSER TO THE PLANNED COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT FACILITIES AT SAN BERNARDINO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.
- 04-10 CREATE A SPECIAL COST RECOVERY DEPARTMENT, FREE OF POLITICAL RESTRICTIONS, WITHIN FISCAL SERVICES OF THE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT, AND FUND IT WITH A MINIMUM OF ONE (1) FULL-TIME STAFF MEMBER. STAFFING SHOULD BE INCREASED AS RECOVERY AND CASELOAD INCREASES.
- 04-11 PURSUE ALL POSSIBLE AREAS OF COST RECOVERY, INCLUDING APPLICABLE INSURANCE FOR HOMEOWNERS, AUTOMOBILE, MEDICAL, HAZARDOUS MATERIAL SPILL, CLEAN UP AND FIRE AND AMBULANCE RESPONSE.

AD HOC COMMITTEE FIRE DISASTER OF 2003

THE FIRES

BACKGROUND

The Grand Prix Fire started on October 21, 2003 near the community of Rancho Cucamonga. It burned 59,448 acres and destroyed 135 homes, 60 outbuildings and one commercial structure. The fire claimed one fatality. 54,684 residents were evacuated. The cause, although not arson, was found to be human in origin.

The Old Waterman Fire began October 25 near Waterman Canyon. There was 91,281 acres of land destroyed in the fire. 993 homes and ten (10) commercial properties were destroyed by the fire. Thirty-five (35) homes had structural damage. There were six (6) stress related deaths and many other injuries. 102,151 residents were evacuated. The cause of the fire was determined to be arson.

The County established a \$50,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of anybody involved in the arson. Another \$50,000 reward was established by Stater Bros. supermarkets.

The fires were so intense that tornado-like firestorms scattered debris higher than anyone in local memory could recall. One pilot involved in water drops reported encountering burning plywood at 1300 feet.

Six air tankers were withdrawn from firefighting operations when the windshields of the aircraft were cracked.

When the Cedar Fire began near San Diego, firefighting resources were stretched to capacity.

FINDINGS

At one time there were twelve (12) different fires burning throughout California. The unified command structure included nine (9) incident commanders each on the Grand Prix and Old Waterman fires.

Priorities kept changing as the emergencies created by the fires changed. The top priority was protecting life and the second was protecting property. Because the Cedar Fire near San Diego began incurring loss of life, resources were pulled from the fires in San Bernardino County and transferred to the Cedar Fire.

The Mountain Area Safety Task Force (MAST) was a success story of good fire management. In September 2002 County officials and other agencies and utility companies began creating plans to handle the potential fire hazard that the bark beetle infestation was creating in the San Bernardino Mountains.

This group realized that if the County experienced fires, the mutual aid system would bring firefighting units to the area. They developed detailed fire maps for those units unfamiliar with County territory. Once the actual fires began, this proved to be very useful.

A lack of adequate channels hindered communications among the firefighting teams, hampering the command control of units fighting the different fires. At various times, while actually fighting the fires, command teams were not always aware of where the fire engines were all located. Utilization of available Global Information System (GIS) technology would have helped the situation by providing instant tracking of fire positions.

RECOMMENDATION

04-12 PROVIDE THE MOST UP-TO-DATE GLOBAL INFORMATION SYSTEM TECHNOLOGY TO THE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT FOR COORDINATED COMMUNICATIONS DURING A DISASTER.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (RIALTO)

BACKGROUND

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is located at Rialto Airport. Its purpose is to coordinate the multi-agency responses to major emergencies that occur in the County. Individuals who are notified to report to the EOC are trained to perform specific functions designated under the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) as mandated in California Senate Bill 1841.

Over 200 EOC responders are ready 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Many agencies stand ready with numerous corresponding Department Operations Centers (DOC). They include County departments, utility companies, hospitals, the California Highway Patrol, the California Department of Transportation, the California Air National Guard, and the American Red Cross.

FINDINGS

Several employees from the County's Information Services Department (ISD) and the County Fire Information Systems (IS) staff were actively involved in the operational support efforts in the County Fire Communications Center at Rialto Airport during the fire disaster in the fall of 2003. ISD also provided support efforts for the Logistics Group. Due to its activity and participation, several observations were made.

When the fire disaster was increasing significantly in scope and its potential impact on mountain communities was becoming more obvious, call volumes and the ability to handle calls efficiently became a challenge. When call volumes increased or it was important to reach a specific individual, the group began to rely on wireless cell phones to successfully accomplish support tasks. Cell phone coverage or availability varied among the different wireless service vendors being used.

A problem that surfaced was the lack of an adequate loudspeaker system at the EOC headquarters. ISD provided the EOC with a portable unit, but it would not interface with the existing speaker system in the building. Integrating a system into the existing speakers in the building would be useful.

The existing EOC Information Technology (IT) infrastructure does not fully accommodate access to the County network. The majority of the EOC participants who staff the various EOC support groups during a disaster are County employees. It is important that they have access to a certain number of personal computer workstations or have the ability to connect their laptops to the County e-mail system, other County information data systems, and the Internet.

This would allow them to perform their assigned EOC tasks and communicate with other County employees and their departments. Access to the County network is being addressed now that the Consolidated Fire Agencies of the East Valley (CONFIRE) and the Joint Powers Authority (JPA) has been authorized by the Board of Supervisors to manage the network services for County Fire and the Emergency Operations Center.

The various EOC support groups (i.e., Information Center, Public Relations, Operations, Logistics, etc.) have procedures and processes that are "paper bound," which makes the communication of statuses and next action steps to be taken somewhat cumbersome.

The EOC management team could take advantage of newer application software technology that would allow them to track their EOC activities from initial event reporting along with all actions taken during the event, up to and including the final action taken to bring it to closure.

This technology approach can incorporate event workflow management with support staff assignment tracking, priority setting and event escalation, if certain activities do not occur according to prescribed procedures and timeframes. Event status and next planned

activities can be displayed on a screen for all to see within the EOC. The system could be accessed to easily obtain this type of information.

ISD states this type of software application is available and cost-effective. ISD also has experience and expertise in developing applications of this nature and can assist the EOC Management Team in this initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 04-13 CONDUCT AN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) ASSESSMENT OF THE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER'S INFRASTRUCTURE WITH REGARD TO WIRE LINE/WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITIES, PERSONAL COMPUTER WORKSTATION CONNECTIVITY AND BUSINESS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT.
- 04-14 CONTACT EACH COUNTY AUTHORIZED WIRELESS CELL PHONE VENDOR AND OBTAIN ASSURANCE THAT THEY HAVE ADEQUATE COMMUNICATION WITH THE RIALTO EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER.
- 04-15 PURCHASE AND INSTALL THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT TO ENSURE THE INTEGRATION OF THE EOC SPEAKER SYSTEM INTO THE EXISTING SPEAKER SYSTEM IN THE BUILDING AT RIALTO AIRPORT.
- 04-16 CONDUCT AN ASSESSMENT OF THE COST-TO-BENEFIT RATIO OF PURCHASING OR HAVING THE INFORMATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT DEVELOP THE SOFTWARE APPLICATIONS TO TRACK ALL ACTIVITY DURING A DISASTER.

EVACUATION AND SHELTERS

BACKGROUND

In the last week of October 2003, when wild fires ravaged County forests, homes and other properties, thousands of San Bernardino County residents were evacuated from their homes. The County and the American Red Cross established evacuation centers that provided food, beds and other basics of life.

San Bernardino International Airport (formerly Norton Air Force Base) in San Bernardino and the Jessie Turner Community Center in Fontana were two designated evacuation centers. Federal, State and County agencies as well as churches, community businesses and other relief organizations contributed their services to the evacuation centers.

FINDINGS

Some mountain evacuees at the International Airport center reported receiving “no answer” to the fire information number for the community of Blue Jay. They evacuated only when alerted by neighbors advising them to “get out.”

In both evacuation centers visited by the Grand Jury it was evident that television and radio newscasts were the only sources of information. The newscasts provided minimal continuous information about the areas from which individuals were evacuated, which seemed to stress already overstressed individuals.

Some evacuees reported thefts at the airport center.

A registration of evacuees was maintained at both centers. If an evacuee left for another destination, no information was recorded about that evacuee’s destination to provide to other individuals concerned about the evacuee’s whereabouts.

At the Jesse Turner Center in Fontana, facilities were not adequate to handle the large influx of evacuees. Four showers were depleted of hot water after several uses. Some evacuees moved out soon after checking into the facility.

Donations of clothing were disorganized. Items were dropped off at the premises without any cataloging done. It made it difficult to accommodate evacuees trying to find needed donated items when they were not properly segregated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 04-17 ESTABLISH A DISASTER WARNING AND INFORMATION TELEPHONE NUMBER (IN ADDITION TO FIRE AND POLICE) AND OPERATE IT 24 HOURS A DAY, EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR.
- 04-18 EQUIP EVACUATION CENTERS WITH STRATEGICALLY PLACED LARGE SCREEN TELEVISION SETS THAT DISPLAY CONTINUOUS UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION FOR EVACUEES ABOUT THE DISASTER AND WHAT IS OCCURRING IN COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY THE DISASTER.

- 04-19 INSTALL MONITORS TO PROTECT EVACUEES FROM PROPERTY THEFT, AND POST SIGNS WARNING AGAINST PROPERTY THEFT.
- 04-20 ESTABLISH A COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM THAT PROVIDES A BETTER TRACKING SYSTEM ON EVACUEES AND PROVIDES INFORMATION TO CONCERNED INDIVIDUALS TRYING TO LOCATE AN EVACUEE.
- 04-21 ESTABLISH A MORE ORDERLY SYSTEM OF RECEIVING DONATED ITEMS AND INSTITUTE A CATALOGING SYSTEM THAT MAKES IT MORE CONVENIENT TO LOCATE AND DISTRIBUTE DONATED ITEMS TO EVACUEES WHEN THEY REQUIRE THEM.

LAND USE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

BACKGROUND

A confidential citizen complaint alleging abuse of power by individuals involved in the Code Enforcement Division of the San Bernardino County Land Use Services Department was received by the 2003-2004 Grand Jury.

A review of this complaint determined that a similar one had been reviewed by a previous Grand Jury and involved many of the same individuals.

FINDINGS

The Code Enforcement Division of the Land Use Services Department operates without a departmental operations manual. An operations manual would assure standard practices throughout the department and eliminate errors in the documentation and uniform enforcement of codes throughout the County.

RECOMMENDATION

04-22	DEVELOP AND ADOPT AN OPERATIONS MANUAL FOR THE CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION OF THE LAND USE SERVICES DEPARTMENT.
-------	---

COUNTY MUSEUM

BACKGROUND

The San Bernardino County Museum consists of a main site in the City of Redlands, and seven satellite museums located in the five Supervisorial Districts of the County.

The main Museum houses a major valuable bird egg collection. The Museum staff has assembled a valuable natural history collection acquired during the oversight of the paleontological site at Diamond Lake near Hemet. The Museum has agreements with the U. S. Bureau of Land Management and other Federal agencies to supervise various dig sites in San Bernardino County and southwest California. The Museum also contracts with local developers to do the necessary archeological studies of land that has been approved for development.

FINDINGS

On July 10, 1970 the Board of Supervisors entered into an agreement (amended July 6, 1971) with Mr. & Mrs. Louis Mousley in which the County accepted the gift of the Mousley Museum.

The agreement stipulates that the County will maintain and keep open the Yucaipa satellite museum, known as the Mousley Museum, "... in perpetuity as a free public museum and wildlife sanctuary for the benefit of the people of San Bernardino County." The Mousley Museum and adjoining wildlife area is currently closed.

During its investigation, the Grand Jury noted that budget cuts and the accompanying loss of staff make it extremely difficult for the County Museum to carry out its mission and maintain the Mousley Museum as stated in the original agreement.

Budget cuts also make it difficult for the County Museum to properly collect, preserve and provide educational displays of collections, as well as the many anticipated acquisitions in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

04-23 INSTITUTE A STUDY OF THE PROCEDURES AND POLICIES REGARDING THE COUNTY'S TREATMENT OF GIFTS, AND PROVIDE GUIDELINES FOR THEIR ACCEPTANCE AND ADMINISTRATION.

04-24 PROVIDE FUNDS TO ENABLE THE COUNTY MUSEUM TO COMPLY
WITH THE 1970 AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE COUNTY AND THE
MOUSLEY MUSEUM.

REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the office of the Registrar of Voters (ROV) is to provide accurate and complete election service to the voters of San Bernardino County.

FINDINGS

The current Registrar of Voters came to this County with previous experience in using the touch screen voting equipment manufactured by Sequoia Voting Systems.

In 2003, complying with Federal and State mandates, the Registrar of Voters purchased 4,000 touch screen voting units and related equipment, software and technical professional services from Sequoia Voting Systems.

The new equipment was first used in San Bernardino County in January 2004 in a recall election in the City of Highland. The election produced results that showed the touch screen voting equipment was accurate and voter and poll-worker friendly. The California Primary Election of March 2, 2004 was the first large-scale use of the equipment. In that election the ROV programmed the equipment for over 20,000 ballot variations in 818 precincts at 408 polling places located in over 20,000 square miles of San Bernardino County.

Our investigation found there were a few minor problems encountered in the March 2004 election. They were identified and plans were implemented to correct the problems.

Permanent polling places are established. No private homes or garages are used. ROV teams check each polling place for adequate working space, sufficient electrical power, handicap accessibility, parking, and ease of voting.

The voting machines are delivered to polling places one or two days prior to Election Day. When the polls close only a box containing the electronic vote recording cartridges and paper printouts from each machine, voted absentee and provisional ballots and excess supplies are transported by vehicles to designated and centralized collection points. They are then transported to the main vote counting equipment at the ROV office in the city of San Bernardino. The voting machines are retrieved the day following an election.

At Primary Election voting sites in March 2004, departing voters were asked to respond to a questionnaire giving their opinion on the new touch screen voting system.

- 98.7% Machines were easy to use
- 96.7% Better than any voting system used before
- 91.8% Confident their vote was correctly recorded

There were complaints that “The hardest part was putting the accessing card into the slot.” The accessing card needs to be securely in place to start the voting process.

Federal funds called “Punch Card Buyout Money” help counties offset the cost of abolishing the punch card system. The funds are supplied to the states for further distribution to counties to help offset the cost of converting from the punch card system to touch screen voting. San Bernardino County’s share of the funds will be approximately \$2.1 million.

The Registrar of Voters should remodel its customer service counters to improve its service to the voters and improve security for the electronic voting equipment stored there.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 04-25 APPROVE FUNDS FOR THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED FOR THE INTERIOR LAYOUT CHANGE AT THE REGISTRAR OF VOTERS.
- 04-26 ALLOW THE REGISTRAR OF VOTERS TO RETAIN 25 PERCENT OF THE \$2.1 MILLION (OR \$500,000) OF THE PUNCH CARD BUYOUT MONEY FOR REMODELING.